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ABSTRACT

This lesson on India was developed based on an Internet Indian diary. The lesson describes visits and experiences in Delhi, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Madras, Jaipur, and Agra. It also provides a series of "virtual field trips" ("Love and Marriage"; "Sacred Places"; and "Solving a Community Problem through Education"). Each field trip presents a rationale; provides a background/historical context; lists central elements; and gives student outcomes, including assignments, activities, and evaluation criteria. (BT)

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**CURRICULUM PROJECTS DEVELOPED BY 1998
SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS**

SUMMER 1998

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES ABOUT INDIA

Lessons written by Fulbright 1998 Teachers

Submitted to

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October 15, 1998

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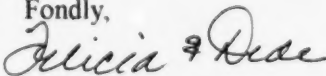
Dear P.J.,

Attached is the lesson which we have developed based on our Internet Indian Diary. We have printed out the relevant pages—the lessons along with the pages of the diary that are required to complete the lessons. The entire diary can be accessed on the internet at <http://home.att.net/~tisone/india.98>

We want to thank you and your staff for the wonderful experience you provided for us and your tireless efforts to accommodate our every whim. We have already used our experiences in our classrooms and our website continues to attract visitors. We are hoping that the Fulbright Foundation will use the India site as a prototype for future Fulbright communication and we hope that we will be able to keep our India site afloat for some time to come. Other members of our group are sending in lessons which will well be incorporating into the site.

We were appalled to find that India is not an option for participants in next year's program. No doubt you are even more distressed than we. Is this a temporary situation due to the "bomb"? Neither of us can imagine a better location for a Fulbright seminar and we will certainly support any effort to reinstate the India seminar.

Again, thank you for a glorious experience. We look forward to seeing you when you come to the states.

Fondly,

Felicia and Dede

INDIA 1998

Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad to India

Unofficial Site

By: Dede Tisone-Bartels and Felicia Eppley



SUMMER 1998

INSIDE INDIA

1. Delhi	2. Khajuraho	3. Varanasi	4. Bombay	5. Ahmedabad
6. Calcutta	7. Madras	8. Jaipur	9. Agra	10. Our last days in India

CURRENCY	PRETRIP ADVICE	1998 ITINERARY	TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA	CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
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Other Sites:

Bhaarat Ek Khoj: Discovery of India

Click here for CNN on India

send comments to Dede Tisone-Bartels (tisone@hotmail.com)

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SUMMER 1998

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES ABOUT INDIA

Lessons written by Fulbright 1998 Teachers

- Arranged Marriages
- What is Sacred?
- Education in India

You might also explore the following additional internet resources for information and lessons

India
a brief history

SCORE
from the State of California Online Resources for Education

(after you visit a site on another server (such "India" or "SCORE") click on the back button in order to return to this page.)

Return to India98

SUMMER 1998

INDIAN TECHNOLOGY TAKES A TURN TOWARD THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

CONNECTING FROM THE US

A Fulbright Summer Program for teachers is an educational exchange. The purpose is to provide teachers with an academic and first hand travel experience. The teachers are obligated to create curriculum that will be used by them and by other teachers upon their return. Sixteen teachers were selected to take part in this summer's trip to India. When we were notified of our selection, we decided to create a web page which could be accessed as we traveled by our friends, our families, our students, and remain a resource to other people interested in India. We knew that it would be a challenge, but decided whatever we encountered was worth the trouble.

According to Internet News.com, "India currently has an estimated 400,000 Internet users, but only one commercial ISP, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited. (VSNL)." While still in the US we contacted this lone provider. It sent us forms to complete and information about the fees. We filled out the forms and sent a bank draft by express mail. Meanwhile, we pursued every lead we could find trying to figure out how to make a successful hook-up once we were in India. We believed that we had covered every possible issue when we left the US laden with a Sony Mavica digital camera, a Hitachi laptop, and a small case full of adapters, transformers, disks, spare batteries and cords.

CONNECTING IN DELHI

We faced our first obstacle in our Delhi hotel when we tried to plug in our laptop to charge the batteries. The wall sockets looked like the adapters we brought with us but the holes are too large for U.S. converters and a dapters so a connection could not be made. We called the hotel desk to see if they had more suitable convectors/adapters and they sent an electrician immediately. We were impressed until we realized that he was unclear about the 220/110 distinction; however, after much discussion and hand gesturing, he got to work on the problem. To our amazement, he produced some shielded electrical wire, hunkered down on beside the outlet and proceeded to hard-wire our converter into the hotel's wall socket. It seemed a rather drastic solution, but it certainly worked.

Now we were ready to get on line. As we had had no answer from VSNL to our request for an Internet connection, we realized that we would have to pay a visit to VSNL's office, which is open only from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays. By foregoing lunch one day, we managed, after several attempts, to

find a three-wheeler driver who could find the office. The next hurdle was to undergo a rigorous scrutiny just to be admitted to the premises. After we had successfully run the gamut of sign-in-sheets demanding seven categories of information, official badge allocation, and a manual security search, we took our place at the end of a long line of folks trying to submit applications to a lone clerk aided only by pencil and paper technology. Once inside, we joined a long line of folks with completed applications which were being processed again by a man using not a computer [there wasn't one in sight] but a pencil.

Because we insisted that we had already completed and submitted our application and our money, we were eventually shunted off to Customer Service. This department proved to consist of one man behind a desk which supported the first computer we had seen at VSNL and two incessantly ringing phones. After making a couple of phone calls and some desultory searching in a computer file, the agent declared that VSNL had not received our application and money and therefore, if we wanted a connection, we would have to start over.

Filling out new forms was simple but paying for the account was not. Neither cash, nor traveler's check or nor credit card was acceptable. Only a bank draft would do. So, we headed for the nearest bank. This was an Indian bank, the Canara Bank, about four blocks away. Actually, it took us a long time to recognize that it was a bank because it was disguised as a defunct establishment--a store-front operation with an dirt-occluded window, a metal expansion gate pulled across the entrance leaving only the narrowest of openings guarded by a heavy chain and padlock under which a potential customer must duck. After ducking through the doorway the next obstacle was a man with a rifle in hand. In spite of the fact that we had our cash in hand, it took 45 minutes to get the bank draft. The form which we had to fill out passed and re-passed through the hands of at least five individuals before it finally reached the only person who could issue a draft. She did issue it along with three copies each of which she had to fill out separately by hand.

By the time we returned to VSNL, the office was closed for lunch. When the office reopened and we reregistered, got new badges, were re-frisked and had paid our money, we found that we still had to return the next day to get an assigned log-in name and password. There was no question of getting these on the spot. We discovered later that our one-day wait constituted special service as the normal wait was twenty days. Remember this is the only commercial ISP in India, the only game in town if one wants to connect with the internet outside of a governmental or educational institution.

CONNECTING IN THE HINTERLAND

Back at the hotel, we found that even with our approved user-name and password we could not gain access to the Internet. Unfortunately, there wasn't time to work on the problem because we were leaving Delhi. However, we were able to get Internet access

through the hotel's business office and so got a couple of pages posted on our website before we headed out to Khajuraho and Varanasi--the technological hinterland--which we knew to be devoid of access numbers. We would have to wait to solve our problem until we got to Bombay. All of the big hotels in cities large enough to have VSNL local access numbers have Internet Access. This makes sending and receiving mail easy via something like Microsoft's Hotmail or Yahoo's free email.

THE INFLUENCE OF SWADESHI

The state of technology in India was baffling to us. How can a country, which produces legions of computer software designers and whose government aspires to have an Internet connection in every public phone booth, put up with such a minimalist technological reality? It is as though India has a split personality when it comes to computer technology. It wasn't until we had been in India for almost a month that we discovered the root of the problem: "swadeshi."

Swadeshi means self-sufficiency and was the rallying cry of Mahatma Gandhi. In the face machine-dominated western imperialism which destroyed India's handmade textile industry and made Indians dependent both economically and politically on the West, Gandhi exhorted Indians to use only those products that they could produce for themselves by hand. He donned homespun and adopted the spinning wheel as his symbol. He and others like him equated western technology with political control. Many Indians still do and the philosophy of self-sufficiency colors many of India's economic decisions. For example, cloth which is imported or made by machine is heavily taxed to subsidize Indian hand-loomed cloth. Computers are a bit more of a problem. They scream "western domination" and yet are necessary to compete in a modern world. Gandhi would have said forget competition; but most Indians realize that that is not practical. The compromise is for India to build its own computers and they do just that, putting Hewlett-Packard parts in Indian-made cases.

CONNECTING IN SMALLER CITIES [SOME WITH ONLY 2 MILLION PEOPLE]

Khajuraho, our second stop, is a prosperous town because tourists flock here to see the erotic carvings in its temples and to enjoy its traditional technology. We saw a potter making a pot on a wheel composed of a large, shallow, clay bowl sitting on a flat rock. The potter turned the "bowl" with one hand and shaped a ball of clay on the "bowl" with the other. There are telephones and TVs but it is not yet possible to make a local e-mail connection in Khajuraho because the current level of demand for the service does not yet mandate a local access number. The same is true of Varanasi. In spite of a population of some 2 million, the lure here is religion not business and there is no local access number. In both of these cities, we planned to do our writing off-line and to send off the ready-to-go pages when we got to the next city with an access number--Bombay.

In both Khajuraho and Varanasi we had the same problems with the wall outlets that we had had in Delhi. In Khajuraho the hotel electrician appeared lugging a turquoise Delta transformer the size of an automobile battery which worked quite well in spite of providing housing for a small tribe of roaches. In Varnarsi we were provided with a scaled down model which worked quite well when it wasn't beset by random power outages and surges.

CONNECTING IN BOMBAY

In Bombay, at the upscale Oberi Towers, our room had two telephone lines and housekeeping produced, at a moment's notice, a small, compact transformer, the size of a healthy lemon. Amazingly enough, the hotel let us purchase it for a mere \$3. This little gizmo is easily the best buy we made in India.

Another plus for Bombay is that VSNL has its headquarters here. Equipped with several computers and people who clearly know what they are about, the Bombay office is obviously the heart of India's Internet connection. With one brief visit, we solved our connecting problems. For the first time we were able to log the laptop on with just a local call from our hotel room.

The only remaining difficulty was connecting during peak hours-from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. Our hotel telephone bills are testimony to the number of times we attempted to connect. Sometimes we got lucky, more times we got up at 5:30 a.m. People at VSNL assure us that this traffic jam will be remedied soon. The government plans to allow other Internet Service Providers to operate in India in the near future. [The entry of private ISPs is expected to drive the user base up to 8 million users by year 2002.] This will surely improved the situation but, because VSNL has the only uplink to a satellite, there will still be a bottleneck. The government has also announced that all telephone services will have internet access by the year 2000 and all cable subscribers will have internet access, but, from the looks of the rats' nests of wires on the poles in most Indian cities, this will take some doing. Even the people at VSNL think this is ambitious.

CONNECTING TO THE FUTURE

Signs of change are everywhere. On every wall in every town, no matter how small, there are advertisements for computer classes. These are primarily training courses in the use of Word, etc., but they are also the gateway to creating a large computer-literate public. [We have been told that many of these companies are scams and many of the scams are American. One promises computer literacy in just two-weeks plus a graduation certificate signed by Bill Gates.] Will the real Bill Gates please stand up?

Indian universities and engineering schools have been turning out highly literate

computer technicians for a long time. Because the Indian economy doesn't produce enough jobs to employ them all, many of the top notch ones head for greener pastures in the U.S. and Europe. Others live in India but earn their livelihoods working for entrepreneurs like H. Ross Perot who farms them out on a short-term or long-term basis to companies all over the globe

Our experiences with our computer, our digital camera and VSNL made up one of the most fascinating parts of our Indian odyssey. We found that in spite of a strong desire to avoid anything that threatens its economic and political independence, Indians, like most of us have been seduced by the wonders of computer technology. While many of the people we met had never even heard of a computer, many of the best software designers in the world are Indians. Indians like the rest of us are faced with a dilemma that is as old as history itself: to maintain the status quo with all of its comfortable familiarity or to move forward into an uncertain but perhaps better future.

If you are still interested, read about what others have written about

the Internet in India.

Bhaarat Ek Khoj: Discovery of India

After visiting a site, click the back button to return to this page

Return to India98

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

SOURCE: As we traveled through India in the summer of 1998 we created a Virtual Fieldtrip. The diary entries that we posted regularly on the internet provide primary source material for this lesson. Entries specific to the wedding we attended can be found on the following pages:

The Wedding page and Wedding Advertisements

RATIONALE: To examine and compare Indian and American culture in order to develop a better understanding of both.

CENTRAL ELEMENTS:

- Multicultural understanding
- Exploring tradition
- bringing the past to the present

STUDENT OUTCOMES: Students will:

- Examine the values that underly certain traditions in their own as well as another culture.
- Discuss the repercussions of these values.
- Compare and contrast the ways different cultures address an issue such as finding a marriage partner.
- Consider the rational basis for the tradition in each culture.

BACKGROUND NOTES/HISTORICAL CONTEXT: In India, the caste system has been outlawed in the sense that no one may be discriminated against in terms of caste. There is in place an affirmative action type program in which spaces are reserved for lower caste people in colleges and government jobs. There is a movement to make such reservations required even for private business. Theoretically, society should be blind to caste but to understand how deeply rooted in Indian society are the castes you do not need to look further than the advertisements for suitable mates.

These advertisements are put in the paper by a girl's/boy's parents or guardian. The ones you see in the newspaper tend to be looking for mates for people 20 and over. Marriages for younger couples is usually arranged within the circle of family and friends. The replies are expected to come from the parents of the prospective bride or groom not from the prospective bride or groom herself/himself. We talked to a woman whose son is 30 and a successful architect in Philadelphia. She convinced him to marry and move back to New Delhi. He agreed and she and her husband put an ad in the newspaper to find him a suitable wife. She received 500 replies. Of those

she selected 7. The first prospect proved to be the child of a couple who were separated—one parent lived in Bombay and the other in New Delhi. She was rejected because of this. The second prospect proved to be suitable in every way and was therefore approached. When the architect son came to New Delhi for a visit, he met his prospective bride and, after several meetings, he agreed that the match would work.

We have included a representative sample of ads. These have been taken verbatim from actual newspapers in India. Some of the words will need decoding. Students will enjoy doing this. We have provided a key to help you help them.

KEY:

- Brahmin - highest caste
- Fair - Indians are quite color-conscious. Light skin is preferred to dark skin. Young men and women are very careful about not getting too much sun so as not to be too dark.
- Homely - This refers to a girl's homemaking skills.
- 25/189/8,000 - age/height in centimeters/salary in Rupees-per-month
A government teacher in a New Delhi primary school might make 7-10,000 Rs per month depending on experience. The exchange rate at this writing is 42 Rupees to the dollar so the salary would be \$166-\$238 per month. Teachers also get a housing allowance and a small medical allowance. Secondary teachers make more but government teachers in smaller cities and in rural areas are not as well compensated. A person just out of college with not specific skills will make about 3-5,000 Rs per month. Computer programmers and engineers make considerably more.
- Decent marriage - arranged marriage
- Convented - educated in a private school, preferably a religious school.
- Eng med - English medium - wants person who has gone to a school in which English was the language used as a teaching medium. It indicates a certain class of school--upper/middle.
- Initials: B.E. [Bachelor of Engineering], B.Ed [Business Education], Mech [Mechanical Engineering], MBA [Masters of Business Administration], MA Econ [Masters in Economics], DME [Degree in Mechanical Engineering], DBM [Degree in Business Management], MNC [Multinational Corporation], MSc [Master of Science]

- No bar at all - caste not a consideration
- Hostel - a boarding house for students or working people - segregated by sex.
- Listings: These ads are listed under many categories--the advertisers choice. Many of the labels denote castes--Jati, Khatri, Kshatriya, Yadav, etc.; while others indicate language/state--Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Keralite, Rajput, etc. Some of the labels indicate the desired profession, religion, or professional degree of the bride/groom.

NOTE: There are also marriage ads which your students can access on the internet. These are placed by Indians in the U.S. Click here to see On-line Marriage Advertisements

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: one 40 minute period

STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES:

Whole class: Discuss how people in the US choose a mate. Determine prior knowledge of actual wedding ceremony in the United States by brainstorming components of a typical wedding. Read through the wedding page.

Discuss:

- The concept of Arranged Marriage.
- Advantages and disadvantages of marriage for love and marriage by arrangement.
- Assumptions made in each case.

Decode the advertisement page in pairs.

Assign one of the following:

- Write your own marriage ad.
- Write a Compare and Contrast Essay

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Essays should be evaluated for examination of underlying cultural assumptions, thoughtful discussion, parallel structure, and mechanics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/APPENDIX: At high school level, outside reading might include: *ARRANGED MARRIAGE* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni ISBN 0-385-48350-3

[click here to return to India98](#)

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<http://home.att.net/~tisone/lessonwedding.html>

10/11/98

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Wedding Advertisements

These are quoted verbatim from the Calcutta Telegraph

July 1998

Grooms Wanted:

Daughter of high ranking central government officer. 25+/158, fair, slim pretty, Kayastha, M.A.Econ, B.Ed (own house/car) suitable groom wanted.

Match invited from professor/Dr/Engr. Highly placed well employed groom for Brahmin Shandilya Debagn, 27/160 M.Sc Physics., doing PhD, good-looking, well built, fair bride.

An industrialist, Hindu, upper caste, Bengal family of Calcutta, is looking for suitable groom for their daughter. Honors graduate, although convent educated, age 23+/5'3", very beautiful, well settled in her own industry. Groom must be from a respectable family, professionally qualified, preferably B.E. (mech) with MBA, settled in business or holding senior position in reputed company.

Well established groom wanted for East Bengali Kayastha, 30/166, doctorate, computer programmer, issueless divorcee, greencard holder, will be visiting in December 98.

Alliance invited from affluent families for Engr. girl DME, DBM 23/160 fair, charming, engaged in family business. Parents having own factory in Bombay & well settled profitable business. Boy must be professionally qualified & preferable willing to allow the girl to pursue her own career in business. Reply with bio-data, horoscope & photo [Ret.]

Brides Wanted:

Baidya groom, September '69, handsome, 35/180 groom B.E.(Mech), pursuing PhD. Groom Company Secretary, Cum legal manager, joint venture MNC, annual salary 4 lakhs. Wanted post graduate (Eng medium) at least 160 cm tall, really beautiful, fair, homely, below 25, Baidya/Brahmin/Kulin Kayastha Bride. Correspond with biodata: time, month year and place of birth. No demand.

Beautiful match for established businessman, 41/172. High Caste divorcee with two

kids in hostel. No bar at all.

Free from religious orthodoxy, 31/170, own house, graduate, handsome, government employee, 8,000/-. Educated, pretty girl desired.

A very handsome, tall, 5'11", very fair, slim, 29 years, highly educated, a successful industrialist having high seven figure income and owning posh apartments and prime properties, teetotaler, non-smoker, world traveled, and coming from a rich, respectable, high educated and cultured south Bombay-based Hindu family. The girl should be extremely beautiful and very fair, slim, tall, educated, sweet-natured and from a cultured family. Beauty Queens, models and Girls from the World of Glamour are also welcome. Proposals welcome from India and world over including Foreigners. Photograph is a must.

North Indian Protest Doctor parents invite proposals from status families for their well settled son 30/167/PGDBA, fair, adventurous, fond of books and music. Looking for an educated, God-Fearing, homely, Protestant Christian girl. Please write with details and enclose a recent picture. Categories under which these ads are placed: Agarwal, Architect, Bengali, Business, Christian, Cosmopolitan, Dawoodi Bohra, Doctors, Engineers, Government/Defense, Gujarati, Hindu, Himachali, Hotel/Shipping/Airline, Maheshwari, Jat, Kannadiga, Khatri, Kayastha, Keralite, Kamauni, Kurmi, Malayali, MBA/C.A., Mangalik, Marathi/Konkani, Muslim, Marwaris, NRI/greencard, Other Professionals, Oriya, Parsi, Punjabi, Rajput, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled tribe, Sindhi, Sikh, Second Marriage, Swarnkar, Tamil, Telugu, Vaish/Jain, U.P.Yadav,

click here to see On-line Marriage Advertisements

click here to return to WEDDING

click here to return to India98

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AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE



While in Delhi, two of us were invited to a Hindu wedding. We met our host, Sunil Pathak, the bride's brother, on our flight to India. To our amazement he invited us because he knew what a rare opportunity it would be for two "little-old-lady" school teachers from America to actually attend a Hindu wedding. He graciously, and with considerable effort, personally delivered invitations to us and saw that we had transportation. His entire family graciously spent time with us, courteously overlooking our improvised Indian wedding attire and hiking sandals. We were dazzled.



It was an arranged marriage as most still are here. The groom is a lawyer with the high court and the bride has just finished her university degree. She had only spent about an hour with him before the ceremony. There were many events leading up to the actual ceremony. Some involved the families, some prepared the bride. In the days before the wedding, she was bathed and oiled, and her hands were painted in elaborate designs with henna. The wedding dress was six yards of heavy gold and red brocade. It was wrapped in the traditional way of wrapping a saree around the body and over the head. The fabric was rather heavy and stiff only her face visible.

Guests began arriving about 7:30 p.m. and were received by members of the family. The bride, meanwhile, was closeted out of sight.

At 9:30 the groom arrived on a white horse accompanied by his relatives. He wore a beige suit and a traditional silver headdress with cascading strands of flowers which obscured his face. About a block away from the wedding hall, the groom and his relatives began a procession, dancing as they went. To accompany the dancers, there was a brightly uniformed brass band. To enable the dancers to see--it was quite dark--there were neon lights. [The neon tubes were attached in tridents of three to each transformers and seven of these were strung together with an umbilical cord of electric wires providing power from a near-by truck with a generator. Each set of lights and accompanying transformer was carried by a young boy.] So, the band played, the lights blazed and the family of the groom danced down the street.



When the procession reached the door of the hall, everyone stopped and gifts were exchanged between the male members of the families.

There was a time when the bride's family was required to present a dowry to the groom and his family. This originally was probably paid in the form of land or cattle, more recently it has involved money and goods such as televisions, refrigerators and even motorscooters. This custom became very expensive for the parents of girls. And, in some cases even led to the killing of girl children. In more recent times it has led to men claiming that their wives have met with a terrible accident when, in fact, the husband killed the wife in order to get a new wife with a new dowry. Such abuses have led to the outlawing of the dowry. However, especially in villages the payment of dowry still seems to be one of the rules of the marriage game. In this case there was an exchange of gifts between families. Respective fathers garlanded each other with marigold leis, embraced and then exchanged gifts. Then brothers paired up, uncles paired up, cousins paired up making similar exchanges.

Finally, the groom entered the hall, where the guests were gathered, and was seated on a *días*. Soon after, bride entered. We asked an aunt, who had married in much the same way, how she thought the bride, Reema, was feeling. The aunt replied that she was probably quite frightened. Once both the bride and groom were seated, the guests paid their respects by approaching the couple in an orchestrated and hierarchical manner to deliver gifts, give best wishes and be videotaped with the rather nervous pair.

Up until this point, the bride and groom were not the focus of attention as they would be in a western ceremony. As they entered the hall, relatives and guests seemed caught up in visiting with friends and enjoying the lavish vegetarian feast that was spread on tables along one entire wall of the hall.

After midnight, the focus shifted to the ritual as a fire was lit and both bride and groom circled it seven times, consecrating the marriage. At this point, the bride, who had originally been seated to the right of the groom, took the seat to the left to indicate her new status. The wedding did not officially end until about 4:00 a.m. when the bride and groom left. We turned into pumpkins much earlier having providently told the taxi driver to wait.

This experience led us to investigate the process of arranged marriage. The traditional way is that the families search for suitable matches with the help of relatives and friends. However, frequently today people are separated from their families and have to resort to other means. The newspapers and even the

Internet are full of advertisements. To see some of these click here

click here to return to Delhi
click here to return to India98

SACRED PLACES

SOURCE: As we traveled through India in the summer of 1998 we created a Virtual Fieldtrip. The diary entries that we posted regularly on the internet provide primary source material for this lesson. Entries specific to our experience on the Ganga (Ganges River) can be found on the following page:

The Ganges

RATIONALE: To examine and compare Indian and American culture in order to develop a better understanding of both.

CENTRAL ELEMENTS:

- Multicultural understanding
- Exploring tradition
- bringing the past to the present

STUDENT OUTCOMES: Students will:

- Compare and contrast the places considered sacred in US and Indian culture.
- Consider the rational basis for the definition of sacred in each culture.
- Examine the tradition and ceremony that surround these beliefs.

BACKGROUND NOTES/HISTORICAL CONTEXT: A major factor in Indian unity is its geography of mountains and oceans which have always protected it. Furthermore, many of these geographical features are considered sacred. The Himalayas are seen as the home of the gods and the place to go to seek wisdom. In addition, many rivers are considered sacred, especially the Ganges which originates in the Himalayas. This river passes through city after city for some 1,500 miles, provides water for some 300 million people, and is considered by true believers to be not only pure and potable but to have mystical medicinal properties which cure the sick and even the dying. Varnarsi (Benaras), dedicated to the god Shiva, marks one of the holiest spots on the Ganges and it is here that Hindus come to bathe, believing that the river's waters wash away all sins. To die here is especially auspicious since it ensures that one will be released from the endless cycle of reincarnation and be instantly united with Brahma. The west bank of the river is lined with series of stone steps called ghats. There are dozens of them and it is to the ghats that Hindus come early in the morning to bathe, brush their teeth, and make offerings (puja) to the rising sun. Hundred of little boats made of leaves, each carrying flowers and a candle, are launched by the visitors. In the darkness, just before dawn, the river is alive with these bobbing, twinkling votives.

Also at the edge of the river are the ghats where the dead are cremated. Bodies are

wrapped in saffron hued cloths, carried on bamboo stretchers and dipped into the river. Then relatives buy firewood for the funeral pyre from the Chandas, a caste of Untouchables, who oversee cremation. It takes about 400 kgs of wood at a cost of about Rs1200 (\$20) to do the job. Ghee (clarified butter), sandalwood and other ceremonial substances are also required and cost another Rs 200-300 (\$4-\$8). Next comes the crucial element, the taking of the fire from the Chanda by the chief mourner to light the pyre. Without this ritual, Hindus believe that the deceased's soul will not find rest. The burning of the body takes about three hours. An electric crematorium, also on the river's edge, is a more economical option, costing about Rs 200; but those who can afford it prefer the traditional method. Some 170-180 bodies are burned and given up to the river each week.

In spite of the fact that so many Hindu's believe in the purity of the Ganges, the river is horribly polluted, containing waterborne diseases like typhoid, amoebic dysentery, cholera and hepatitis. The government acknowledges the problem and in 1992 completed the Ganga Action Plan Phase I, which saw the installation of sewage treatment plants along the river. However, these efforts were not sufficient and even the plants, which do exist, lie idle most of the time due to frequent power outages. When the stations are not pumping, the sewage flows into the river. Nowhere is the problem more evident than in Varanasi. Eighty percent of the pollution here comes from sewage. "Fecal coliform levels, a common index of water pollution, are a staggering 345,000 times the acceptable levels where the Ganges runs by Varanasi" according to a recent article by Marion Lloyd in the Houston Chronicle [July 5, 1998]. The city is growing rapidly and its population will soon exceed 2 million. The sewage system, installed during the days of British control, has not been able to keep pace with the city's growth. According to Lloyd "even when the pumping stations are working, some 45,000 gallons of raw sewage flow into the river daily. Black foam bubbles up along the entire four-mile stretch of bathing area where people brush their teeth and young boys fish for shrunken mussels. Charred remains of human bodies and dead cows float to the surface alongside the wooden skiffs that ferry pilgrims along the river."

Possible solutions: One of the most promising solutions is being proposed by a Hindu priest, Veer Bhadra Mishra, the hereditary leader of one of Varanasi's most important temples, who is also a professor of environmental engineering and the director of the Sankat Mochan foundation, a non-government organization dedicated to cleaning up the Ganges. His proposal, which he developed with the help of a team of California engineers, involves a system of sewage-devouring ponds that would be constructed downstream from Varanasi. The plan would also involve pipes to divert the city's sewage from the bathing areas and pumping stations to lift the sewage into the treatment ponds. While there are other proposed systems which are similar, this system appears to be the most efficient at removing fecal matter.

However, because of costs, many in the Indian government see it as impractical and believe that more pumping stations, even though insufficient, will be the only

possible choice. Unfortunately, whatever solution is finally agreed upon, it will not be implemented until 1999 at the earliest.

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: one 40 minute period

STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES:

Whole class: Read through the Ganges page.

Define:

- sacred
- pilgrimage
- holy
- salvation

Discuss:

- places in the US considered sacred to Americans. (think of Native Americans)
- places outside the US which Americans consider sacred.
- a society's responsibilities for a place considered sacred.
- the assumptions made in each case.

Writing Assignment:

- Write a Compare and Contrast Essay which compares places that are sacred to you and your family to India's Ganges River.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Essays should be evaluated for examination of underlying cultural assumptions, thoughtful discussion, parallel structure, and mechanics.

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GANGES



Three-thirty a.m. comes very early in the morning. We boarded the bus in the dark and headed for the Ganges, here known as the Ganga. To the amplified sound of religious music and the slap, slap of a man washing clothes on the ghat (steps which lead down to the water). We clambered on board a boat and pushed off.

A young man on the boat began lighting small votive candles which rested on round leaves sprinkled with fragrant flowers.

He handed a candle to each of us and we launched them in the water as an offering to Mother Ganga. Then our crew set us gliding parallel to the western shore. It is the western shore which faces the sunrise and therefore, because it is an auspicious location, all ceremonies take place there.

We were not safe from the trinket sellers even in the boat. They approach from all sides fully stocked with toys, containers for Ganga holy water and statues of the Hindu gods.

The eastern shore is farmland, but the western shore is densely lined with buildings. Many date to the Moghul era, and all are designed to provide access to the Ganga.



Several imposing structures were built by maharajas in a bygone age and are now being used by pilgrims. Some of them are hostels for tourists and some ashrams for holy men.



Also on the river is the ghat where bodies are cremated. Bodies are wrapped in yellow and orange cloths, carried on bamboo stretchers and dipped into the river. Then relatives buy firewood for the funeral pyre. It takes about 400 kgs of wood (Rs1200--\$20) to do the job. Ghee (clarified butter, sandalwood and other ceremonial substances are also required and cost another Rs 200-300 (\$4-8).

Untouchables oversee the cremation of bodies. They are the Chandalas and fire is taken by the chief mourner from the Chandala to light the pyre. The taking of the fire from the Untouchable is a crucial element. Without it, the deceased's soul will not find rest. It takes about three hours for a body to burn completely. There is a modern, electric crematorium on the river as well. It is most economical, about Rs 200, but most people prefer the traditional way if they can afford it. Some 170-80 bodies are burned along the Ganga each week.

Further along the bank we floated by men and women bathing, brushing their teeth, washing clothes (the dhoti-wallahs--laundrymen--have their own ghat), temples, men shaving, sadhus (aesthetics), and children swimming. We passed a Shiva temple where men with drums, gongs, and conch shells played a cacophonous tribute to Shiva as the water licked the bottom step where they stood. After passing this, there was very



little noise except for a man playing a bamboo flute who wandered along the bank and provided a surreal score to the scene.

We stumbled from the boat, climbed the stairs and walked through the narrow alleys, past a multitude of closet-sized trinket shops. Every step of the way we were dodging piles of manure and boys selling everything from flowers and brightly colored pastes to holy water from the Ganga. We were back in the hotel by 8:30 a little dazed but all richer from witnessing this daily expression of faith.

[click here to go to a Lesson about Sacred Places](#)

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SOLVING A COMMUNITY PROBLEM THROUGH EDUCATION

SOURCE: As we traveled through India in the summer of 1998 we created a Virtual Fieldtrip. The diary entries that we posted regularly on the internet provide primary source material for this lesson. Entries with information about schools in India can be found on the following pages:

Education in India.

The "Education" page is a composite of what is woven into the diary entries from the following cities.

Calcutta

Bombay

Ahmedabad

RATIONALE: To examine and compare Indian and American culture in order to develop a better understanding of both.

CENTRAL ELEMENTS:

- Multicultural understanding
- Exploring tradition
- Bringing the past to the present

STUDENT OUTCOMES: Students will:

- Understand the complexity of the problem of educating millions of Indian children.
- Consider how some educational institutions are working to solve problems beyond education in India
- Apply what they have learned to propose a solution to a community problem of their own.

BACKGROUND NOTES/HISTORICAL CONTEXT: In India, the story of education is not encouraging. Class size ranges from 40 to 60 students per teacher and teachers are poorly trained. A primary school teacher only needs the equivalent of a high school education. Some 33 million children between 6 and 10 are not in any school at all. More than half of all government classrooms in India don't even have blackboards and half of the villages have no school at all. Part of the problem is lack of funding. However, lack of funding isn't the entire story.

One of the problems that complicates the education process is language. The constitution recognizes 15 national languages but there are some 227 recognized

mother tongues plus dialectical variations. The decision as to what language or languages should be used to delivered education is not an easy one to make. Several scripts further add to the problem. The British tried to solved the problem by using English and the Roman alphabet as the teaching medium and there is still an effort to use English as sort of a neutral national language. In many palces, therefore, English is taught along with the local language or dialect. To many people the use of English smacks of colonialism, yet, often those who complain the loudest are the same people who send their children to private English-speaking schools [called English-medium schools.]

Another major problem is the allocation of the funds which are available. In the past, institutions of higher learning have been supported, at the expense of primary schools, with the intention of developing homegrown talent. [Tuition at state instututions runs about Rs 15 or about 50 cents a month, a figure that hasn't changed in 50 years.] However, with the lack of jobs for these highly trained graduates, other countries [the U.S. Britain, etc.] are the beneficiaries as they syphon off computer software writers and engineers, leaving India to foot the education bills. Meanwhile, primary schools are left wanting and those village schools which do exist are especially handicapped with virtually no equipment and often indifferent teachers. Why, one asks, doesn't the government end subsidies to colleges and universities? Because a well-educated elite, which can afford to send its children to private primary, middle and high schools, wants the luxuru of free, first-rate higher education. The present government has promised to increase the level of expenditure on education from approximately 3% of GNP to 5 or 5% of GNP

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 3 class periods

STRATEGIES/ACTIVITIES:

Whole class: Read through the Education in India page.

1st period: Discuss

- The problems addressed by each of the schools.
- The possible reasons why each school addressed the problem that it did.

2nd period

- Make comparisons to problems in the United States. Where do we have similar problems to these?
- Discuss the responsibility a society has for the education of the youth

Assignment:

- Work in pairs or small groups. Think of a problem in your community. Write a proposal for how your school could solve this problem.

3rd period: Present proposals to the class

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Essays should be evaluated for examination of underlying cultural assumptions, thoughtful discussion, significance of problem, reasonableness of the solution to the problem and mechanics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/APPENDIX: All information on this page was based on site visits and personal interviews.

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LITERACY IN INDIA

The story of Indian education is not encouraging. Class size ranges from 40 to 60 students per teacher and teachers are poorly trained. Even so, some 33 million children between 6 and 10 are not in school. More than half of all government classrooms in India don't have blackboards and half of the villages have no school. Part of the problem is lack of funding. However, lack of funding isn't the entire story.

A major problem is the allocation of the funds which are available. In the past, institutions of higher learning have been supported, at the expense of primary schools, with the intention of developing homegrown talent. [Tuition at state institutions runs about Rs 15 or about 50 cents a month, a figure that hasn't changed in 50 years.] However, with the lack of jobs for their highly trained graduates, other countries [the U.S., Britain, etc.] are the beneficiaries as they siphon off computer software writers and engineers, while India is left to foot the education bills.

Meanwhile, primary schools are left wanting and those village schools which do exist are especially handicapped with virtually no equipment and often indifferent teachers. Why, one asks, doesn't the government end subsidies to colleges and universities? Because a well-educated elite, which can afford to send its children to private primary, middle and high schools, wants the luxury of free, first-rate higher education. The present government has promised to increase the level of expenditure on education from approximately 3% of GNP to 5 or 5% of GNP and to divert funds from universities and research institutions to primary schools.

Language is another problem that complicates the education process. The constitution recognizes 15 national languages but there are some 227 recognized mother tongues plus dialectical variations. Consequently, the decision as to what language or languages should be used to deliver education is not an easy one to make. Several scripts further add to the confusion. The British tried to solve the problem by using English and the Roman alphabet as the teaching medium and there is still an effort to use English a neutral national language. In many places, therefore, English is taught along with the local language or dialect. To many people the use of English smacks of colonialism, yet, often those who complain the loudest are the very ones who send their children to private English-speaking schools [called English-medium schools.]

Virtually every Indian we talked with from any walk of life agrees that Indian education is not working. While precious few remedial measures are being taken by the government, there does seem to be a number of interesting model schools being developed by businesses, government, religious institutions, and individuals across the country. Many of these schools offer innovative solutions to some of the country's most difficult problems.

THE GODREJ SCHOOL

The Godrej School is a dramatic example of an attempt at an industry-supported solution to several societal problems simultaneously. Godrej, an industrial giant, is a vast, family-owned corporation which makes everything from soap to safes. India-wide, it employs some 17,000 people and supplies housing for all of them except the contract workers--those who do menial tasks like sweeping). The Bombay

plant has 12,000 employees. Factory workers get apartments with two rooms, a kitchen and bathroom; while managers get three rooms, kitchen and bathroom. Directors get comfortable bungalows. All accommodations are nestled in attractive native greenery.

Godrej is run by Pirojsha Godrej, the son of the company's founder, Ardeshir Godrej, who started small, with locks. Pirojsha Godrej is not only an entrepreneur, but a committed environmentalist. He believes that India cannot survive without a drastic reduction in its population. He also believes that India has to educate its children. Meshing these goals, he has developed a remarkable education program for the children of the company workers.



Children of factory workers, children of managers, and children of directors all go to school together in large, attractive, well-ventilated classrooms. Three levels of schooling are provided: Pre-primary, Primary, and Secondary. Children at all levels learn sports, art, music and computer skills taught by exceptionally well-educated and dedicated teachers. Pre-primary classes call to mind the Montessori method. In the primary classes the arts are evident everywhere, and the art materials are all recycled from various factory leftovers.

The cost of the education is Rs750 a month per child. Parents pay Rs100 a month of this cost and the rest is subsidized by the company. Salary levels are designed to cover the school payments.

So what's the catch? This is where Godrej imposes his commitment to population control. No employee may send more than two children to the school, and, with the entry of the second child into the school, it is necessary that one parent undergo sterilization.

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Questions:

- What are the problems Godrej is addressing?
- How does this company compel its employees to undergo sterilization?
- Do you think this requirement is appropriate? Why or why not?
- Could a company do this in the US? Why or why not?

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA



The Indian government is also in the business of specialized schooling. One of its most successful efforts is the group of 587 schools, called Kendriya Vidyalaya, spread across India which caters to children of military personnel and other peripatetic government workers. Dealing with students who move frequently is especially difficult in India. Not only does the curriculum vary from state to state but the language differs as well. In order to provide as much continuity as possible, the government has developed schools which follow a standardized curriculum and testing time table, use the same textbooks and issue grades

using the same standardized progress report forms so that a student can be sure of staying up with his/her work no matter where his/her parents are sent. In order to mitigate the language difficulties which occur when a student moves to a state with a language other than his/her own, the students at all KV schools are taught in Hindi and English and study Sanskrit as well. Regional languages may be studied as electives.

The Kendriya Vidyalaya, which serves the children of army personnel in New Delhi, is a pleasant open building serving 4,000 children ranging from the first grade through the twelfth grade. The ratio between staff and students is 1/27 but class sizes can be as large as 50. Most of the classes seem to hover around 40. There is little use of technology--no overhead projectors, VCRs, etc., but the government has made a commitment to fund computer installations in schools around the country and Kendriya Vidyalaya feels that, with its connections to the central government, its system stands a good chance of getting its share of technological upgrading early on. Questions:

- What is the problem addressed by the Kendriya Vidyalaya?
- What are the advantages of the KV system?
- Do children who move from place to place in the US have similar problems? What are they?

THE LORETTO SCHOOL, Calcutta

In addition to business and government, there are also religious groups working to improve Indian education. There are some 22 schools in India run by the Sisters of Loretto alone; seven of these are in Calcutta. Originally, Loretto schools catered to middle and upper-middle class children. However, when Sister Cyril arrived on the scene in 1980, she decided to make some changes. Today, this Loretto school has a student body of which about 40% pay tuition and about 60% do not. Paying students are selected on the basis of an admission survey which screens for the values Sr. Cyril deems essential to her mission--social service values. Her major thrust is helping Calcutta's street children. To this end she has created the Ripples and Rainbows program in which the students at the Loretto school spend part of each day in a work/service class tutoring street children.

As a result, there are tutors available all day and street children, who can't always come on a regular basis--because they have to help their families earn a living, or because they have to take care of a sibling, or because their family migrates in and out of Calcutta seasonally, or because they have been swept out by the Sunshine Program [an attempt to eradicate street dwellers].



Consequently, these children are able to come when they can and learn at their own rates. There is always an open door for them. The progress of each child is recorded on his personal chart by each tutor. When the child can do some basic reading and arithmetic, he/she is then sent to the local public school just across the street. [The Loretto school itself can't handle all of the children who need schooling. As it is it has classes of 55 students] The child then comes to the Loretto school in the morning before public school begins [at 10 a.m.] and after school. Here he/she gets help with homework, snacks, clothes, and, in many cases, a place to sleep. Amazing? Well, this is only part of the Loretto story. Their "Barefoot Teachers" Program trains village members with limited formal education but a positive attitude, to set up village schools. These teachers are brought to Calcutta to take part in workshops in the latest teaching techniques and are trained to use materials at hand--recycled paper, rocks, nature, etc. Students from the school travel to villages on a regular basis to provide tutoring for village students.

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Questions:

- What are the values the Loretto School looks for in a student? What does this mean?
- Do you believe that everyone should be able to read and write? Why?
- Why would it be difficult to get an education if you were homeless?
- Do we have a problem with homeless children in the United States?
- How does a homeless child get an education in the United States?

The EKLAVYA SCHOOL

The Eklavya School is yet another example of private school education in India. Located in the suburbs of Ahmedabad this is a newly minted school experimenting with innovative methods of organization as well as instruction. The effort is the work of two young men with graduate degrees in business management who believe that the talents of a master teacher, the principal, shouldn't be wasted on dealing with minutia of administration--toilet paper in bathrooms, etc. Their philosophy is reflected in the school's motto: "Discover yourself. Be your own light. Make your own road"

Eklavya presents a sharp contrast to government schools

Eklavya's founders have a long-term vision: to develop a model for successful schools. To do this, they

need good teachers and this is where they faced their first hurdle. In order to launch their initial program, they interviewed 2,000 applicants for 18 positions. They found that because state certification requires only two years of study beyond high school, teachers are ill-equipped to do any real teaching. In the end, Eklavya's hired and trained university graduates with no teaching education but with positive attitudes. Consequently, they have developed a teacher training program which will eventually be a two-year program and is open to anyone. Eklavya is committed to raising the standards of teacher proficiency along with both esteem and salaries.

The school started small, with primary grades last year and added pre-primary class this year. The Eklavya formula includes home visits as well as bi-monthly open-house for parents.

Before establishing the school, its founders did a great deal of research. They found that while girls do better in same-sex settings, boys don't. The aim of the school is to have a student body composed of 60% girls and 40% boys in hopes that this particular mix might just be the answer.

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They are also committed to the idea of incorporating technology into the curriculum and intend to have a computer in every classroom in two years.

Students are chosen by lottery. The fees are not high by Indian private school standards, but they do prevent the very poor from attending. Therefore, scholarships are offered to children from families of rickshaw drivers, sweepers, etc.

Questions:

- How does teacher certification in the US differ from teacher education in India?
- Why is it important that students are chosen by lottery?
- Do you think girls do better in an all girls school? Why or why not?
- Would a school with 60% girls work better than one with 60% boys? Why?

PREMJYOTI SCHOOL FOR THE DISABLED

. Another example of individual initiative and, in this case, heroism, is the Premjoti Integrated School for the Disabled. Hunkered in the midst of cultivated fields on the outskirts of Varnarse, it consists of three small, thatched shelters where five teachers, one assistant and a man who pedals the schoolbus rickshaw look after 75 children, 22 of whom are physically or mentally disabled. The children sit in rows on floor mats and write with chalk on small slates. They are engaged in their lessons, clean and well-behaved. At the same time, small miracles are being performed as the misshapen legs of crippled children coaxed into normality with antiquated orthopedic devices.

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The school was founded and is run by a young couple, Teresa and Pawan Kumar. Teresa worked for seven years with Mother Teresa and Pawan received his master's degree in social work in Delhi. The two met and decided that their calling was to start a school for handicapped children in this area. Originally, the Pawans took in only handicapped children; but eventually they decided that including non-handicapped children would be advantageous to both groups. The fact that parents of the non-handicapped students are eager to have their children at the Premjyoti School speaks volumes for the quality of the education offered. The physical condition of many of the children is heartbreaking. It isn't just that they have disabilities but that many of their problems could be solved so easily with a pair of decent braces in one case or a hearing aid in another.



The boy at the right in this picture was in an accident and the bone in his left leg was improperly set. As a result, his leg is permanently bent at the knee at a forty-five degree angle making it impossible for him to walk. Unfortunately, the relatively simple orthopedic help necessary to repair his leg is beyond the small community's means. The Pawans receive no help from the government, but, rather, depend upon donations from supporters. Eventually, the

Pawans hope to build a place to keep a few children overnight so that students who are just out of rickshaw range can be accommodated.

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Questions:

- What problem does this school address?
- What problems does this school have ?
- What are the benefits of having an handicapped and non-handicapped children going to school together?

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